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ABSTRACT

Providing guidance and support is the subject of this document, one of 9 modules in an 11-unit resource pack designed to help trainers and postsecondary and continuing education staff meet the needs of special needs students in Great Britain. Having completed the module, staff should be able to: (1) define what is meant by guidance and support; (2) describe guidance and support activities; (3) show an understanding of their role and responsibility in providing initial support; (4) employ appropriate guidance and support techniques; and (5) recognize the limits of their role and know when to get help from other sources. The module defines guidance, support, and self-advocacy; outlines the component skills of self-advocacy; lists guidance activities and stages of intervention; describes the skills of attending, active listening, questioning, and giving feedback; summarizes the guidance and support process; discusses the importance of having institutional policies regarding guidance, support, and confidentiality; and lists questions staff should consider when deciding whether to refer students to others. Fourteen exercises are included in the module. (CML)

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LEARNING SUPPORT

GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

8

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INTRODUCTION

For learners with special needs, the availability of the right guidance and support at the right time can be a crucial factor in ensuring access to learning opportunity. Guidance and support means providing facilities and processes to enable learners to progress, to make their own choices and to control their futures. It is about the empowerment of individual learners and not making decisions for them. Teachers/trainers have a crucial role in making support available as they have the major contact with the learners.

KEY QUESTIONS

- What do we mean by guidance and support?
- What is involved in the provision of guidance and support?
- What is your role in this provision?
- What skills do you need in order to make this provision?
- How can you develop these skills?
- What is the policy on guidance and support in your establishment?
- When should you seek specialist support?
- Do learners know where, when and how to get advice, guidance and support?

AIMS

- To examine the nature and process of guidance and support provision.
- To consider the role and responsibilities of teachers/trainers in the support process.

OBJECTIVES

By the end of this element you will/should be able to:

- define what is meant by guidance and support;
- describe the activities you might use in providing guidance and support;
- show an understanding of your role and responsibility in providing initial support;
- use approaches which enable learners to take responsibility for their own learning;
- employ appropriate guidance and support techniques;
- implement your establishment policy on this issue;
- recognise the limits of your role and know when to get help from other sources.

GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

EXERCISE 1. DEFINITION AND AIMS

Individual activity

This activity is designed to help you to consider what guidance and support mean and what their aims are.

In your work as a teacher/trainer, write down what the terms below mean to you:

- guidance

- support

Write down what you think the main aims of guidance and support are.

Small group activity

Form small groups of three or four and discuss your answers. Make a note of your conclusions and prepare to feed them back to the whole group.

RESPONSE CHECK-LIST

You may wish to compare the outcomes of your discussions with these descriptions.

Guidance

Some teacher/trainers describe guidance as:

- Giving the learners help in their choices over careers, courses, training programmes and/or the content of individual programmes, etc.
- Guidance covers advice on all matters relevant to education and training, whether vocational or personal.
- It is a helping strategy which encompasses numerous activities including counselling.

Support

Support is described by some as:

- providing the *extra* help required by learners to enable them to gain access to, and benefit from, education/training provision;
- making appropriate provision in terms of policy;
- resources;
- staff;
- liaison with other agencies to meet identified needs.

Guidance and support together aim to help learners to become more self-reliant and more able to cope with decisions about their futures.

In a training or education setting, the main rationale for guidance should be that it helps learners in making decisions that will shape the course of their education/training, vocational and personal development.

This broadly based approach to the provision of guidance and support means that staff will be involved in each of the areas of education/training, vocational and personal support. While the teacher/trainer is primarily concerned with learning, personal factors are likely to play an important part in the process and are sometimes impossible to separate from it. For some learners with special education/training needs this is particularly significant. The degree of involvement of each staff member will vary, depending on the policy and guidance procedures within each establishment and their roles in it, but all staff will need the same counselling and guidance skills.

The guidance and support process can be a lengthy one for some learners with special needs, some of whom will have spent much of their lives in sheltered environments. A process that aims to increase the independence and autonomy of learners with disabilities is the self-advocacy movement; we shall take a brief look at this next.

SELF-ADVOCACY

What is self-advocacy?

Cooper and Hersov (1987) describe self-advocacy simply as:

'People being their own advocates and speaking for themselves.'

The self-advocacy movement has developed during the last two decades and has particularly involved people with learning difficulties saying what they want for themselves and pursuing their own interests. Previously, these individuals had other people, such as parents or carers, who would speak for them, make decisions for them and determine their lives.

Self-advocacy includes the concepts of independence, freedom of choice, self-expression and group awareness. For people working with self-advocates, it means altering the balance of power in the relationship between the self-advocate and her/his parents and staff. Self-advocacy is not only about learning sets of skills, but also about changing relationships and attitudes. This does not mean that the learners have a licence to do or say anything they wish, but that they should have the same opportunities to choose their own goals and pursue them responsibly.

What are the component skills of self-advocacy?

SIGNPOST

Cooper and Hersov *We can Change the Future* (SKILL, 1987) deals in detail with this subject.

In order to help learners develop self-advocacy skills, it is necessary to understand the skills involved. These are:

- the ability to know what goals or objectives are possible;
- the ability to choose between goals;
- the ability to express choices and feelings;
- the ability to act upon the choice to achieve the objective and to assess progress;
- the ability to find help when necessary to achieve the chosen goal.

● EXERCISE 2. THE ROLE OF THE TEACHER/TRAINER

Individual activity

It is important to recognise that the constraints experienced by the trainer/teacher in the training/teaching environment, are very different from those of the guidance 'specialist'. The professional specialist working either inside or outside of the teaching/training workplace will have a different role in support of the trainer/teacher and learner.

This activity enables you to consider your role in the guidance and support process.

Write down your responses to the following questions:

- Do you have a role in respect of guidance and support? Yes/No
- If yes: How do you see your role? If no: Why do you say this?

Guidelines for facilitators

You may wish the participants to share their responses to these questions. In the rest of the element, the activities will encourage the participants to review their opinions. You may prefer to ask them to keep their own written comments for comparison, as they progress through the element.

● ● ● EXERCISE 3. ISSUES FOR GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

Small group activity

This exercise will help you to focus on the specific issues or problems which you might encounter in your work.

Draw up a list of issues or difficulties which a learner with special education/training needs may present to you.

You may find it easier to start with difficulties which you have encountered in your own experience.

Remember that most of these issues or difficulties could arise with any learner.

Here are some examples to start your list.

- 'I'm fed up with everybody making jokes about the way I talk.' (Learner with communication difficulties)
- 'I don't want to go to office skills any more, it's a waste of time.'
- 'I can't come to your session any more because I have to see the physiotherapist.'
- 'Nobody wants to work with me. They say I'm too slow.'
- 'My mum says I shouldn't be doing things like this because it's dangerous.'
- 'I can't find a boyfriend/girlfriend. It's making me really depressed.'

Discuss your list of issues and tick those which you think are your responsibility.

Who is responsible in the other cases?

Keep your list of issues for a later exercise.

EXERCISE 4. GUIDANCE ACTIVITIES

Whole group activity

This exercise will look at the kind of activities that might be involved in the provision of guidance. The choice of activity will depend on the circumstances and context in which the guidance occurs.

Brainstorm the activities you think might be included in the overall function of guidance.

Discuss and revise your list.

Give a brief example or description for each of the activities you have listed.

Check your list against these suggestions:

CHECK-LIST

Informing giving details of the range of options available, offering no judgements as to how the information should be used.

Advising making a suggestion based on experience, helping the learner to interpret information, but ensuring that the learner chooses how to act on it.

SIGNPOST
Negotiation is explored in Element 3, **Devising Individual Learning Programmes**.

Negotiating working things out, in discussion with the learner.

Counselling helping learners to reflect on and understand the issues and problems confronting them.

Enabling helping learners to deal with the demands of the learning experience of the course/training programme or other organisations, institutions or agencies.

Advocating negotiating directly with others on behalf of the learner.

Teaching providing learning experiences which help the learners to gain appropriate skills to deal with the issues or problems.

Changing the system some problems may be resolved by changing the system rather than the learner.

Liaising conferring with others, with or on behalf of the learner about progress.

SIGNPOST
Element 4, **Assessment and Review** covers this issue.

Reviewing discussing progress with the learner and making related decisions.

Referring identifying and contacting the most appropriate source of further guidance and support for the learner.

Taking action acting on behalf of the learner in an advocacy role to achieve a specific outcome. This can be a part of guidance work if it enables learners to take action for themselves in future.

Evaluating assessing the effectiveness of an approach to issues/problems.

●●●

Small group activity

Form the same small groups as for Exercise 3.

Find your list of issues from Exercise 3.

Consider which of the guidance activities you would use for each issue. Remember that these activities are not mutually exclusive; you may find yourself involved in more than one activity in the same session.

Identify other staff who may be involved in the guidance provision.

You should make a list of any of the guidance activities which you feel insufficiently skilled or experienced to attempt yourself.

STAGES OF INTERVENTION

The roles of guidance and support may be usefully examined by identifying the stages through which the learner will pass. These stages apply to the whole of the formal course/training programme as well as the parts such as work experience, off-the-job training, etc. These are:

- at the pre-entry stage (including recruitment/selection)
- on entry to the learning activity (induction)
- during (participation in the activity)
- at the end (transition, preparing for progression)

●●● **EXERCISE 5. EXPLORING THE STAGES**

Small group activity

This exercise helps you to consider the issues which are likely to confront learners at various stages during their courses or training programmes. It also highlights the role of the teacher/trainer in providing appropriate guidance and support.

Form four groups. Each group should select one of the stages identified above.
Stage 1:

- Imagine you are one of the central characters.
- Consider and list the kinds of problems you might experience.
- Think of the questions which you might want to ask.

Stage 2:

- Identify and record the aims of the tutor in providing guidance for the learners in Stage 1.
- Suggest the most appropriate guidance activities for achieving those aims.

●●●●

Whole group activity

Each group should feed back the outcomes of their discussions.

INFORMATION SHEET

The following list highlights a number of general issues for the learners at each of the stages as well as possible aims for the teacher/trainer.

At the Pre-entry stage
(including recruitment/ selection)

It is important to note that many people and agencies may be involved at this stage, including the careers service, schools, etc. Although you may not be directly involved, it is necessary to be aware of the issues.

Learner issues

What skills do I have?
Which of these do I want to work on further?
What will I be able to do with the new skills I develop?
How will this training programme/course help?
What will the training programme/course be like?
What will I be expected to do?
What demands will be made of me?

Aims for the guidance agents

- To help the learner to identify her or his learning needs and develop a personal agenda as a basis for an individual programme plan.
- To assist the learner to understand the nature and structure of the training programme/course.
- To explain what the training programme/course involves and what will be expected of the learner.
- To help the learners to understand the benefits and costs of attending the training programme/course.

Guidance activities
Mainly informing, negotiating, contracting, liaising.

On entry to the Learning activity
(induction)

Learner issues

Where is everything?
Who is everyone?
What do people expect of me? (staff and fellow trainees/students)
Is it like I expected it to be?
How do I get out of here?

Aims for the teacher/trainer or managing agent

- To help learners to cope with transition.
- To help them come to terms with what is expected of them on the training programme/course.
- To enable learners to explore and work through any anxieties they may feel about the training programme/course.

Guidance activities

Mainly informing, referring, advising, monitoring, counselling, liaising.

During
(participation in the activity)

Learner issues

How am I getting on?
Can I cope?
Why do I have to do . . .?
Am I happy with the course/training programme?
Am I getting what I wanted/expected?

Aims for the trainer/teacher

- To help the learner to reflect and review progress.
- To help her/him to accept the consequences of the learner role and the demands made on her or him.
- To monitor learner progress and identify and tackle any blocks to learning.

Guidance activities

These include negotiating, counselling, enabling, teaching, liaising, reviewing, evaluating.

At the end
(transition, preparing for progression)

Learner issues

What can I do now?
What have I learned?
What do I want to do next?
What will I do next?
How can I go about acting on my decision?
Who can help me?

Aims for the trainer/teacher

- To help the learner to review achievements in terms of knowledge and skill development, personal development and competence.
- To assist learners to examine the range of options and make choices.
- To prepare learners for accepting the outcomes of their decisions, i.e. the possibility of not getting what they want and exploring other options.
- To help learners to implement their action plans.

Guidance activities

These include informing, advising, counselling, advocating, changing the system, liaising, reviewing, referring, evaluating.

[adapted from *Tutoring* (Longman for FEU, 1982)]

SKILLS FOR GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

The first, essential requirement for the provision of effective guidance and support is a good relationship between the tutor/trainer and the learner. This relationship must be based on trust which grows from acceptance, respect and openness.

This section will look at three areas of skill which are essential to all guidance in personal, educational/training or vocational matters.

These skill areas are:

- attending and active listening
- questioning
- giving feedback

SKILL 1. ATTENDING AND ACTIVE LISTENING

Giving other people your full attention and concentrating on what they are saying and what they mean is not easy.

This is especially the case in the kinds of situations in which teacher/trainers might find themselves involved in giving guidance and support.

Although we all, supposedly, spend a lot of time listening, it is surprising how often in a conversation people say what they think without really listening to the other person.

Listening involves two aspects: attending and getting the message.

Some learners with special needs will have difficulty in communicating. For them, it is especially essential that you employ these skills.

EXERCISE 6. ATTENDING

Individual exercise

In order to listen attentively, it is necessary to put aside your own concerns and show a real interest. This involves using your face and body. These activities are designed to explore these factors.

Think of an occasion when you were talking to someone who you felt was not listening to you.

List all the clues and signs that made you realise that the person was not listening.

Write down how you felt. What emotions did you feel?

How did you react?

Groups of three

Form groups of three.

One person spends two to three minutes talking about any subject.

The second person actively avoids listening.

The third person observes.

Swap roles and repeat the exercise, but this time the second person listens attentively.

List all the clues and signs that the person *was not* listening.

List all the indicators that the person *was* listening.

Discuss how the 'talkers' felt in both cases.

Supporting information

You may like to compare your observations with the following.

Not listening

– physical clues and signs

No eye contact, posture, head movements, facial expression, no nodding or smiling, fiddling with papers, yawning.

– verbal clues

Lack of any response, talking about something else, humming or whistling.

Listening

– physical clues and signs

Eye contact, facing the person, an open posture, nodding, reflecting the 'talker's' facial expression.

– verbal clues

Saying yes or uh-huh, responses which show an interest.

How the 'talker' felt

– when the listener was not listening

Angry, frustrated, disappointed, aggressive, irritated, depressed.

– when the listener was listening

Encouraged, relieved, understood, happy, interested.

GETTING THE MESSAGE

Attending and listening carefully is the first step to good communications but this is not enough on its own. A high degree of skill and concentration is necessary in order to understand the *real* message. You need to consider both the content of what is said and the way in which it is said. Any discrepancy between these two features could indicate a hidden message.

In order to attend and listen actively, we need to remind ourselves constantly of these questions:

- Am I able, and do I care enough, to give this person my full attention?
- Do I really prefer talking to listening?
- Am I thinking about the effect I am having on the learner?
- What sort of signs and clues am I giving – physically, verbally?
- Do I only hear what I expect, or want, to hear?
- Do I listen for hidden messages, both what is said and how it is said?
- Am I distinguishing between what the learner says is the problem and what is the real problem?

SKILL 2. QUESTIONING

Teachers/trainers use questioning techniques as an everyday part of their teaching/training. In this setting, the questioning is often to check whether learning has occurred and the teacher/trainer often knows the answer to the question being asked. In providing guidance and support, the questions will have a different emphasis. You may not know the answer for any individual learner and you will try to encourage the learner not only to express 'the facts' but also to explore his/her feelings towards them. It is important to recognise that the way questions are phrased and presented by the questioner, can shape the response.

Different types of questions:

open	–	cannot be answered with a simple yes/no
closed	–	requires a simple response, a yes/no answer
multiple	–	two or three questions strung together; these are difficult to answer and therefore easy to avoid
leading	–	you are implying the answer and asking the learner to agree
vague	–	no clear purpose
rhetorical	–	answers your own question
follow-up question	–	asks the learner to explain more

● ● ● EXERCISE 7. TYPES OF QUESTIONS

Small group activity

This exercise enables you to consider the types of question which will be of use to you in providing guidance for your learners.

Form small groups of three to five.

Imagine you are helping a learner with her or his work. Think of, and write down, a few examples of each of the types of questions listed above. (You may like to add some other types of questions yourself.)

Identify those questions which you think will be most useful in providing guidance. Prepare to feed back the outcomes of your discussions to the whole group.

How look at this example.

1. You are finding this work difficult aren't you?
2. What are you finding difficult about this work?
3. What do you think makes this work difficult for you?

What types of questions are these, and what do they encourage the learner to think about?

Discuss and write down your views.

Whole group activity

Guidelines for facilitators

Each group feeds back the main points of the discussion.

You may find it interesting to compare the outcomes of your discussions with this interpretation:

1. Closed question. The learner is required only to think whether the work is or isn't hard.
2. Open question. This encourages the learner to think about where the difficulties lie.
3. Open question. This allows the learner to think about his/her **feelings** about the difficulty.

Questions 2 and 3 are likely to serve a more useful purpose.

USING SILENCES

In teaching/training it is usual to prompt the learners to help them find the answer. However, the provision of guidance and support can be hindered by this technique since it is important to give the learners time to reply. This means that you may need to leave silences to enable the learner to reflect and work things out.

Judging when to allow a silence and when to ask another question is difficult. You may feel awkward sitting in silence but do not be tempted to fill the space with multiple questions, preventing the learner from making progress.

The other consideration for some learners with special needs, is attention span. If the learner has a limited attention span or is easily distracted, you may need to repeat the question and check that she or he is still thinking about the issue.

There is no rule about leaving silences; the only answer is to try questioning as a form of guidance, yourself.

FORMULATING QUESTIONS

Useful forms of question are:

- those which encourage the learners to think things through for themselves;
- those which follow up what is said by asking for expansion, clarification or confirmation. This may involve paraphrasing and summarising what has been said so you can check that you have listened attentively and understood both thoughts and feelings;
- those which turn the learners' general responses into concrete form. This helps the learner to focus, to explore the real difficulty and to understand better her or his own feelings.

EXERCISE 8. PHRASING QUESTIONS

Individual activity

This activity helps you to explore ways of phrasing questions.

Read through the examples of questions given below. Add further examples of your own.

Questions which encourage the learners to think things through for themselves:

- What do you think about that?
- What else could you look at?
- How do you feel about that?
- What was your reaction?

Questions which follow up what is said by asking for expansion, clarification or confirmation. This may involve paraphrasing and summarising what has been said. This will enable you to check that you have listened attentively and understood both thoughts and feelings:

- Can you tell me more about...?
- What do you mean by...?
- Am I right in thinking that...?
- So what you're saying is...?

Questions which turn the learners' general responses into concrete form. This helps the learner to focus and explore the real difficulty and achieve greater self-understanding:

- I'm fed up with...
- What exactly are you fed up about...?

Guidelines for facilitators

You may wish to make a composite list of all the suggestions made by participants and discuss whether or not they would achieve their aim.

EXERCISE 9. MOVING THE DISCUSSION FORWARDS

Small goup activity

It is easy to get stuck in a discussion by simply repeating the initial points. This activity is designed to help you to rehearse your responses to comments from your learners so you can move the discussion forwards.

Form small groups of three or four.

Discuss and note the questions you would ask in response to the list of general statements given below, in order to move the discussion forwards.

SAMPLE STATEMENTS

'I can't keep up with the others.'
Q. How can we change things to help you?

'I don't like working with this group.'
Q.

'I'm really angry.'
Q.

'I feel very depressed.'
Q.

'I hate this course/training programme.'
Q.

'You keep on getting at me.'
Q.

'Things are bad at home.'
Q.

'What's the point of it all?'
Q.

'I just can't do it.'
Q.

'They always leave me out.'
Q.

EXERCISE 10. GUIDANCE IN PRACTICE: LISTENING AND QUESTIONING

Activity in groups of three

The best way of developing your guidance skills is to try them out. This exercise will give you an opportunity to practise.

Form groups of three.

One person will act as the interviewee, the second person will be the interviewer and the third person will observe. The exercise will be repeated three times, so you can take on each role. For each interview/discussion you should spend a few minutes preparing for the role. Each interview/discussion should take about five minutes.

Interviewee

You will determine the subject of the session. You can:

- select a problem you have experienced or are currently experiencing in relation to your work.
- role-play by:

  either assuming the role of a learner with whom you have been working and discussing a problem she or he has experienced or by assuming the role of one of our central case studies and discussing a given problem.

You have arranged to talk about your problem with your tutor/trainer or colleague.

Interviewer

You have arranged to talk about a problem.

Your interviewee will either be discussing his/her own work problem, or will be playing the role of a learner with a particular problem.

You should concentrate on attending and actively listening (physical and verbal factors), understanding the real problem and on your questioning skills.

Observer

You should take notes on the guidance session.

You should include examples of:

- physical attending
- verbal attending
- awareness of the real problem
- types of questions asked
- the interviewee's response to each of the above

Discussion

Comment on the following:

- What was good about the interviewer's performance?
- What could be improved and how?
- How did the interviewee feel and respond?
- Any other observations.

SUMMARY OF THE STAGES IN THE GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT PROCESS

Establishing a relationship

- trust
- respect
- acceptance
- openness
- expressing interest
- attending and active listening

Exploring the issue

- getting the message
- using open questions
- phrasing questions appropriately

Helping the learner to

- achieve understanding
- take action
- consider the options
- make own decisions
- tackle own problems
- plan action
- implement action
- evaluate and review

SKILL 3. FEEDBACK

The guidance and support process involves giving and receiving feedback. This enables the learner to receive information about how she or he is seen by others and the effects of his or her behaviour from the points of view of other people. It includes giving information about how the learner goes about things and what the learner actually did, rather than just referring to the outcomes. Carl Rogers has considered the process of providing feedback, and references to his work are made in the **References and Bibliography** section of Element 9.

Useful feedback:

- helps learners to be aware of how other people see them;
- is given in an acceptable way, e.g. without humiliating, embarrassing or making the learner lose face;
- is accurate;
- is given in a sensitive way.

Teacher/trainers need to consider:

- When is it useful to give feedback?
- What kind of feedback should be given?
- How can it help the learner?

AVOIDING THE PITFALLS

It is all too easy for the unwary trainer/teacher to fall into the traps identified below. The first step to avoiding the pitfalls is to be aware of them.

- Elaborate sympathising — This shifts the focus from the learner to your own feelings.
- Imposing your own values — It is easy to make judgements based on your own values which may well differ from the learner's.

• Being 'over psychological'	Try to avoid attaching 'labels' related to your own psychological theories; avoid trying to play 'the amateur psychiatrist/psychologist'.
• Being too busy to listen	Time is important; make an appointment if necessary.
• Finding a quick solution	This often masks the real underlying problem.
• Blocking emotions	It is difficult to deal with a learner's outburst, but it might be a necessary part of the process for him or her.
• Asking too many questions	This fails to allow the learner to take control of the discussion.

The trainer/teacher should, through active listening, adopt the role of a *reflector*. This enables the learner to develop self-reliance, independence and become 'empowered'.

• Wanting to be 'liked'	In developing good working relationships, it is easy to begin to feel indispensible. Avoid overfamiliarity with those with special needs. It is belittling and hinders their self image.
• Coping with silence	It is difficult not to feel uncomfortable. You need to be able to manage silence.
• Collusion or identification	Identifying your own views or feelings with your learners turns the focus from them to you.
• Wanting to do too much	This is an easy trap with those who have special needs. You need to find ways of helping your learners to help themselves.
• Transferring your anxiety	When the situation is threatening to you, it is important not to reflect anxiety back.
• Making too many allowances	It is essential to be aware of the danger of this with learners with special needs; it is easy to underestimate and avoid challenging them.

●● EXERCISE 11. GUIDANCE: AVOIDING THE PITFALLS

Activity for pairs

This exercise should enable you to become aware of the various pitfalls, so you can avoid them in your work. It helps you to explore appropriate responses.

Form pairs. One participant will play the role of the trainer/teacher, the other will play the learner.

Trainer/teacher Choose one of the pitfalls outlined above. Respond in a way which illustrates it.

Learner Choose an issue on which you wish to receive guidance. You may wish to select from those identified in Exercise 2.

SIGNPOST
Element 5.
Training/Teaching and Learning Strategies

Change roles and repeat the role-play. This time the trainer/teacher should respond in a way which avoids the pitfall.

Repeat this sequence until you have covered most, or all, of the pitfalls.

●●●●

Whole group activity

Discuss the outcomes of the role-plays, noting the appropriate responses and approaches which were used.

GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT – ESTABLISHMENT POLICY

By this stage it should be quite evident that, as teacher/trainers, we are all involved in developing self-reliance and independence in all of our learners. The teacher/trainer plays an important part in facilitating this process by providing the first level of guidance and support. It is equally important to ensure that there is a clear policy on how this provision should be made available throughout the whole establishment.

It is evident that any learner who is experiencing difficulties will fail to make adequate progress. She or he may unburden him/herself on any staff member, repeating the same problems and failing to make any real progress in tackling them. The most satisfactory way of dealing with these instances is to have a nominated person with responsibility for each learner. This may already be an established part of your working practice.

For example, you may have:

- a tutorial system
- access to managing agents
- course tutor responsibilities
- college counsellors
- access to specialists
- a guidance team

On the other hand you may have an informal arrangement.

Whatever your circumstances, you should ensure that:

- each learner has a named person to turn to when necessary;
- the learner knows who this person is, and where/how they may be contacted;
- all staff concerned with the learner know who the named person is;
- the named person and the learner can get on with each other.

SIGNPOST

Element 9, **Sources of Help and Advice** considers this in greater detail.

It is not necessary for all learners with special education/training needs to be the responsibility of specialist staff members (where they exist). Any member of staff may appropriately offer guidance and support to these learners. Remember, there is a limit to what any individual can do, so the crucial thing is to know when and where you can go to if specialist help is needed.

● ● ● EXERCISE 12. ORGANISING GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

Small group activity

This exercise enables you to examine or develop your establishment policy on guidance and support.

Advance preparation

Make sure that you have any available, written documentation of your establishment's policy relating to guidance and support.

Methods

Form small groups of three to five and look at the provision of guidance and support in your establishment by answering these questions:

- Who are the people available to offer guidance and support, in your establishment?
- Do different people offer guidance on different types of problems, e.g. personal problems, educational/training problems?
- Do all staff see some of the provision of guidance and support as a part of their responsibility?
- Do all learners have a named person to monitor their support and guidance needs?
- Do the learners know who this is and when/how they can be contacted?
- Do the other staff know who the named person is for each learner? How can staff find out who this is?

- Who is responsible for allocating learners to staff?
- How flexible is the provision of guidance and support?
- Is time allocated for guidance and support? Is it adequate?
- Are there opportunities for informal guidance and support? If not, how can you provide them?
- Can it take place individually and/or in a group? Who decides?
- Do you share relevant information between staff members? How is this organised?
- What policy do you have in relation to the issue of confidentiality? If none, what should it be?
- How do you decide to refer learners for more specialist help?
- Are all staff members aware of the other agencies to whom referral may be made? If not, how can they be made aware?
- Are there opportunities for all staff to practise and develop their guidance skills? If not, how can they be made available?

Use your answers to:

- either devise a policy for the provision of guidance and support in your establishment;
- or discuss and revise your existing policy.

CONFIDENTIALITY

This is a complex issue and one which you need to talk about in your workplace. Whatever your practice and/or policy, the most important consideration is to be honest with the learner. If you cannot or do not keep information confidential, then this should be clearly stated to the learner. As a result, you may chose not to encourage the disclosure of personal information. By stating your position clearly, you are enabling the learner to make his/her own decision about what to tell to whom.

●●●● EXERCISE 13: CONFIDENTIALITY

Whole group activity

This exercise assists you in considering the issue of confidentiality and the appropriate action to take when incidents occur.

Brainstorm a list of possible guidance topics which could raise issues of confidentiality. Include examples of any incidents in which you have been involved.

For example:

- A learner says she or he has just been diagnosed as having epilepsy, but doesn't want anyone to know.
- A learner with learning difficulties says her father has been 'interfering' with her.
- You tackle two learners who are behaving badly. They say they have been glue sniffing, and 'What's it to do with you anyway?'

●●●

Small group activity

Form small groups of three or four.

Discuss what action you would take in each of the cases identified in the brainstorm.

Devise guidelines on confidentiality to give to a new staff member.

Guidelines for facilitators

You may wish to discuss the guidelines as a large group and draw up one set. These may be used by your establishment, subject, of course, to your verification procedures.

REFERRAL – OTHER SOURCES OF HELP

There will always be occasions when circumstances suggest that you should refer a learner to someone with the appropriate expertise. For example, you may feel that the problem is long term and will require ongoing contact. You may feel that you are out of your depth or that expert advice is essential.

You will need to decide for yourself:

- whether you are 'opting out' because it is easier or more comfortable for you to do so;
- whether you could provide the guidance if you, yourself, receive support from an 'expert';
- whether the guidance needed really requires the introduction of expert help.

Deciding when to refer a learner to another agency, is a skill in its own right.

Once you have decided to look for other support, a number of questions arise:

- Who is the appropriate person/agency?
- What kind of service is provided?
- How should contact be made for referral?
- Who should make that contact?
- Who can help you to answer these questions?

SIGNPOST

Element 9 **Sources of Help and Advice** can assist you in finding the answers.

EXERCISE 14. SUMMARY: GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT IN PRACTICE

Small group activity

This exercise helps you to utilise the issues considered in this element in applying the skills you have developed. It presents a number of case-studies to enable you to do so.

Methods

Form small groups of three or four.

Look at the case-studies and decide what action you would take.

- Would you provide guidance yourself?
- What form would it take?
- What would you need to consider?
- Would you refer elsewhere?
- If so, when, where and how?
- If not, why not?

You will need the case-study information about the young people – Chris, Richard, Michael and Sandeep – from the **Resources Section**.

Consider the additional information about them, given on the next page.

Whole group activity

Each group should feed back the outcomes of the discussion. There are notes provided with which you can compare these outcomes.

Finish the activity by summarising the most important points about the provision of guidance and support.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Case-study: Chris

Chris is a learner in your group and he has poor written communication skills. This group has been together for several months. For some reason, the group has rejected Chris. They refuse to work with him and whenever you plan pair or small-group activities, he is always left out. At first you thought it was just a passing phase, but it has been going on for too long. Chris is shut out of all activities.

Case-study: Richard

Richard is one of the young men in your group. He has discovered that the other members of his group have less strict parents. They are allowed to stay out late, wear fashionable clothes, go to discos and have girlfriends. He has had constant rows with his family and wants to leave home and share a flat like some of the others. He asks you if you can advise him on how to find a flat share.

Case-study: Michael

Michael attended from a boarding school for children with emotional and behavioural difficulties. He has been making adequate progress apart from a few unexplained absences. He gets on quite well with the other learners but you have heard reports, on the grapevine, suggesting that he has a vicious temper. He has been absent for four days, then returns with deep cuts and bad bruising to hands and face, saying that he can't do any written or practical work.

Case-study: Sandeep

Sandeep has been working reasonably well but has been quiet and withdrawn. He has suffered from depression and takes medication regularly. Sandeep's parents are both high earning, professional people and his brother is academically able. He asks to see you because he says the work is too hard.

Discussion options

A number of options can be considered in each of these cases.

Case-study: Chris

The first case may be seen as primarily a case of group management and would be something which you would deal with. Individual guidance for Chris and group guidance were approaches suggested. It would be important to find out what the *real* problem is, and to try to deal with that.

Case-study: Richard

The second case would probably be referred on, as Richard's problems appears to be complex and long term. It is unlikely to be limited to a problem of accommodation. When, where and how you would refer, depend on your particular establishment's policy and staffing.

Case-study: Michael

In the third case you would need to deal with the immediate problem of how the learner can participate given the temporary disability. It may be appropriate to discuss the cause with Michael, especially as there have been obvious signs of violence. Michael's responses to initial questioning may indicate a need for some long-term guidance from another source.

Case-study: Sandeep

Sandeep would probably be offered guidance by the tutor/trainer in relation to the perceived difficulties over the work. This may or may not be the real problem. If Sandeep is taking medication, then it is likely that he is receiving regular medical check-ups. This may provide a source of referral if the problem is more complex than it appears. On the other hand, it is easy to jump to conclusions on the basis of Sandeep's past history. It is important that adequate support and guidance is offered by the teacher/trainer before any other action is suggested.

SUMMARY

EVALUATION CHECK-LIST

Can you:

- define what is meant by guidance and support?
- describe its main aims?
- list and describe a number of activities which you might use in providing guidance and support?
- identify the main skills you need in providing guidance and support?
- list the skills you feel sufficiently skilled to try in practice?
  If not, how do you plan to develop them?
- identify the major pitfalls in providing guidance and support?
- ensure that you don't fall into the pitfalls?
- describe the organisation of guidance within your own establishment?
- gain access to it?
- describe some possible issues arising from confidentiality and the stance you would take?
- list the types of problems on which you would offer guidance and support yourself?
- recognise when you would suggest referring the problem on to specialist staff?
- identify the useful agencies outside your establishment?
  If not, what action do you plan to take?

SIGNPOSTS

Links to other elements include the following:

SIGNPOST

Element 9, **Sources of Help and Advice**, considers the people and agencies in detail.

SIGNPOST

Element 3. **Devising Individual Learning Programmes** – section on negotiation.

SIGNPOST

Element 4. **Assessment and Review**

8

EMPLOYMENT DEPARTMENT GROUP
TRAINING
AGENCY

Skill
NATIONAL
BUREAU FOR
STUDENTS WITH
DISABILITIES